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THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING.

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THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING,

A Poem:

WITH SOME SMALLER PIECES.

52180
ac

BY JOHN SCOTT.

—Whither is he gone? What accident
Hath rapt him from us?

Paradise Regained.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR TAYLOR AND HESSEY, FLEET STREET.

1817.

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TO

GEORGE DARLING, M. D.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is another's wish, as well as my own, that the following Poems should be dedicated to you. We believe that your ability, and zealous friendship, were the immediate means of prolonging the life of that dear child, whose untimely death, when at a distance from you, has drawn from me the principal piece in this small work. We feel that we should be depriving ourselves of a consolation, as well as violating a duty,

were we not to offer you this dedication;—and you, who have conferred on us so many favours in the shape of services, will not, we are sure, deny us the satisfaction of this public expression of our gratitude. We should even be conscious of standing culpable towards him whom we have lost, if we did not endeavour thus to connect his name with yours; for, with a quickness which in him had its spring in an affectionate disposition, he discerned and felt the extent of his obligations to you:—while we can never forget that to your watchful and skilful superintendence of his health, was obviously owing, in a very principal degree, the cheerful mildness of character, and the air of general and ready enjoyment, which made beautiful the period of his existence, that shortly preceded his unexpected dissolution.

Farther, let me say, that it is directly to be traced to a long course of laborious, anxious, courageous, and judicious exertion of your knowledge and talent, that I have now a partner in this fervent acknowledgment of your very disinterested, and much valued friendship.

JOHN SCOTT.

PARIS, *January* 24, 1817.

THE Child, whose unexpected fate has given rise to the following Poem, lately died at Paris. He was accompanying his parents to Italy, when, after a fortnight's duration of sudden illness, they lost the faithful companion of their travels. The expression of their sorrow would probably have been kept private, if this event had happened in their native land: but, under the circumstance of absence from England, they have felt inclined to venture the present publication, as a *monument* of the dead, sufficient to preserve them from experiencing the cold and wounding idea of total estrangement. Their son is buried in the cemetry of the *Père la Chaise* near Paris:—his grave is at

the very back of the ground, on the top of the hill; and a stone pillar, erected over his body, bears the following inscription.

PAUL SCOTT,
AN ENGLISH CHILD,
AGED EIGHT YEARS AND A HALF,
THE SON OF JOHN AND CAROLINE
SCOTT,
DIED AT PARIS, NOV. 8th. 1816:
HE WAS BURIED HERE BY
HIS SORROWFUL PARENTS.

Not without heavy grief of heart did we,
Sojourning homeless in this foreign land,
Deposit in the hollow of the tomb
Our gentle child, most tenderly beloved.
Around his early grave let flowers rise,
In memory of that fragrance which was once
From his mild manners quietly exhaled.

The above lines are an adaptation from Mr. Wordsworth's fifth translated epitaph from Chiabrera. The allusion to the "flowers," which would appear in England almost too fanciful for the reality of grief, is, in Paris, strictly appropriate:

a general custom exists there of railing-in the graves, and planting around them mourning shrubs, and other suitably-selected plants. There is surely a comfort to be derived from all such marks of attention to those whom we have lost; and flowers seem to speak peculiarly to the heart, when below them lie the withered remains of youthful beauty and promise.

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*** *The Reader is requested to observe, that fresh paragraphs commence at the top of pages* 6, 14, 16, 25, 32, 33, 36, *and* 41 : *the usual sign of distinction—an indenting of the first line—was inadvertently omitted throughout the leading Poem.*

THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING.

THE

HOUSE OF MOURNING.

Our little boy is dead!
Yes,—we have lost that gentle, faithful child,
Whom doating tenderness could never spoil,
So good he was in heart, so undefil'd!
He to his mother never turn'd his head,
But love, submission, and content to smile.

And to his wearied father no one knows
How much he was:—this let me now declare.
The garden of our hopes has lost its rose;
Our path leads no where;—all the view is bare!

Our hearts beat dull, wanting their vital air;
No voice replies to our accustom'd call:
We *can* have nought,—for we can nothing share
With him,—whose part in what we had was all
It was to us:—he made it great, sweet boy, though small.

But can it be!—shall we ne'er see that face!
Fresh-printed still his footsteps we can trace;
Can we not catch him at some favourite place!
Here are his signs, and tokens, all around;
Oh, let us seek him, he may yet be found;
Oh, let us listen for his gladdening sound!
His hasty voice, springing on wings to greet us:
His grateful run, quick as his heart, to meet us:—
No, no,—he lies in nook of foreign ground;
Mute, cold, and lonely,—in a sheet he's bound!

Can that be true of *him!* He seem'd of life
The very principle;—happy in living;

Alive to every thing, but guile or strife,
And always liveliest when pleasure giving:
The brightening sun, that shone upon his play,
The fields and flowers in which he took delight,
The bustle of the streets, that made him gay,
The cheerful candles of the social night,—
With each, and all, his self he had combin'd,
Such was the full enjoyment of his mind;—
If he is gone,—why are they left behind!

Yet, can we say they have to us remain'd?
Life is to us exhausted now, and drain'd:
The morning comes to us with weariness,
The night with wakefulness,—meal-times with fulness;
The fineness of the day is dreariness,—
Silence disturbs us,—friendly talk is dulness:
What's passionate in grief has left our eyes,
And heavy, sunken, woe within them lies.

There is a blow which tortures for the time;
But there's a worm that gnaws for ever;
Which the heart feeds, and feels it would be crime
From its companion even to seek to sever!
The sting that curdles, and the coil that presses,
We have in lieu of our dear boy's caresses;
And we will cherish them where he was kept,
And they shall harbour where our child has slept,--
Though he escap'd us, they shall still remain,—
Our pleasure slipp'd us,—let us guard our pain;
Since we've lost him, all other loss is gain!

We'll find relief in sense of deep enduring;
We'll seek delight in thinking ill past curing;
And we will shew allegiance to our child,
Fix'd as his love for us,—changeless and mild:
Hours, days, and months, and years, shall pass away,
His sightly form, now stiffen'd, shall decay,

His eyes our pride, his limbs our decent care,
His gentle mouth, his clean and silky hair,
His round and restless hands, that warm'd and slid
In ours,—his feet still running where we bid,—
His arms that drew him to his mother's breast,
His lips that kiss'd her when he went to rest,—
The graceful, tender, carriage of his joy,
When she came forth, led by her darling boy,
Who, as the morning grew, and she lay sleeping,
Was looking, listening, and on tip-toe creeping,
Restless, yet checking his solicitude,
Lest aught should reach her of disturbance rude,—
Then springing like a bird, when gleam'd her eye,
That her first sight on his blest smile might lie :—

Fathers, and mothers! this is what we lost:
Hopes are all wither'd, purposes all crost;
A moment's thunder-clap, and he has perish'd!
And villain Time will savagely demolish

Death's leavings,—cracking his fine forehead's polish,
And breaking-up the frame we nurs'd and cherish'd!

But this is not yet done:—
There still remains, though in the grave, OUR SON;
His limbs are cold, but they are perfect still!
Sure not a creature yet hath pierc'd its way
To make commencement on his precious clay,—
On him we could not save, to have its will.
Cold rains have fallen; he lies dark and damp,
While we sit dully round our fireside lamp:
Ah! he'd have edg'd himself a place
To let it shine upon his happy face!
That happy face, so mild, and fair,—
Oh, Paul!—our love, our ceaseless care!

Now, then, is the dismal but fit season,—
While yet he is, but is not here,—

To abjure forgetfulness, as heinous treason
To him I stretch'd upon the bier:
In the devotion of our broken spirits,
We swear to think upon his merits:
No change of fortune shall perplex us,
No other loss shall ever vex us;
Each living look, howe'er respected,
Shall be with his last look connected,
And all that seem'd worth counting on
Shall but remind us he is gone.
When conversation takes a flow,
We'll shuddering think of his pallid lips;
And when the sunshine spreads a glow,
We'll think how dreary death's eclipse,—
When it falls on the tender flowers of the earth,
Dear in their natures, and fair from their birth!
Life must run on, and wants must have their means,
But we will walk the field like one who gleans

After the sheaf is carried,—stooping low
For little; without heart or power to sow,
But picking what is scatter'd, as we downward go.
Life must run on,—but it will be through weeds;
Alas, it has turn'd from the cheerful meads,
And sedgy and dull, no matter how short,
'Twill wear on its way to that gloomy port,
Where the sea of oblivion comes up on the coast,
And we shall sink where our child has been lost!

These are not words of course;
Those who knew him will know their force:
His look of life and pleasure well they knew,
That mark'd him for himself, special and true;
That made his name convey to every ear
A creature only found when Paul was near.
Oh, he was ours by habit and by heart,
So that it seemed impossible to part!

He was a presence never out of sight,
First object in the morning, last at night;
Our fellow-traveller when from home we went,
On every little service he was sent;
And ever round our ways his eyes would hover,
Like watching cherub, or like anxious lover,
Excuse for busy doings to discover.

Glad harbinger was he when friends would call,—
Flinging a ray, like sunshine on a wall,—
Glancing in corners, darting on the floor,
Chasing our goings, playing round our door;
Midst storms and troubles, still a shining spot,
Which threw a heat, and 'lighten'd all our lot.
Unconscious of each foul and evil thing,
He drew around our lives a hallow'd ring,
Within whose bounds, when grief or want assail'd,
We stood, and found a charm that never fail'd.

Oh, native fragrance, more enjoy'd than told!
Blest spark of warmth, o'er which we cower'd when cold!
Sweetest diffusion of domestic balm,
Our table's olive-branch, our parlour's palm!
His silver tongue struck every short hour's close,
Round which a shadowy hand now dumbly goes:
A stated summoner, with looks of light,
To duties, and to pleasures he made bright;
To share his tasks, his sports, his handinesses,
To meet for him each care that tries yet blesses
The parental heart;—unlike that foundering sorrow,
Which sinks to-day, to anchor down to-morrow.

We had no need to avoid his prudent ears,
Love and simplicity had made him sage;
He sung our gladness, mutely marked our tears,
But ne'er inquired, or sought to pass his age.
When our looks darken'd, and he saw us tried,
Closer than usual to his mother's side

He quietly would creep, and there would wait;
Watching with meek and patient looks the while
When he might break the cloud with sunny smile,
Nor e'er was tir'd, although the time came late;
Nor e'er attempted he the change too soon,
But, at the very moment, out he burst like noon!

And when, not oft, our plans had won success,
He was a reveller,—in delight he'd swim;
Asking no questions, he would laugh and bless,—
We were rejoic'd, that was enough for him.
Dear child!—with grief secrets will find their way,—
In overflow of soul, then, let me say,
That ever since this precious charge we had,
The ways have all been rough, the weather bad;
Much has escap'd me,—more I have conceal'd,—
I've stood midst those I lov'd, and closely prest,
Although the pain hath work'd to be reveal'd,
The hidden thing that gnaw'd me to my breast.

Though hard the storm, better it still should lower,
Than the sky clear, since we have lost the flower:
'Twould give a taint of rancour to regret,
If life were now to rise, since he hath set.
He was the spring of every wish,—the crown
That honour'd profit, and that capp'd renown:
When objects various ways would seem to draw,
'Twas only him we reach'd, or far off saw:
For ever in our hand, yet still in view,
Endearing old things, and adorning new,
He was our being's circle,—'twas complete,—
All started from him,—all in him did meet.

His mind was opening to discern my schemes,
I mark'd the dawning, and I felt so proud,
Hope said, he soon would commune with my dreams,
Now hopelessly I commune with his shroud.
Gently dispos'd, his feelings were inclin'd
To lie indulging on the fair and kind;

But deeper movements in his breast had place,
We've seen them labouring in his serious face:
We've watch'd him hide his eyes, asham'd of view,
When tears have sent a cloud into their blue,
Touch'd by some sudden word, or sight sublime;
For pensively his early thoughts would climb
Amongst the strange and mighty works of God,—
Ardent in curiosity,—yet aw'd
By what he heard:—Not that we dar'd to explain
Wonders, that human system must profane,—
We ventur'd nothing that we did not know;
And thus his heart kept its first tender glow,
Unquench'd and pure,—a living lambent flame,
Fresh and ethereal from Nature's altar;
And under Nature's hand would shake his frame,
And, overpower'd, his smooth-ton'd voice would faulter,
When casually he met God's sacred name!

Such was our child;—the child we could not save!
The work of years is lost within his grave—
When hand in hand we wander'd through the night,
He play'd before our feet, an earthly light,
And when our view through future life went far,
He tipt the distance, like a heavenly star!
Look where we would, singly and clear it shone;
Upwards or downwards, still our eyes it fill'd,—
And kindling-up appeared its power to gild,—
When suddenly it *shot*,—and, lo! 'tis gone!

Our shatter'd minds, like something struck unfair,
Sprung from the fracturing blow, with useless force;
Imagination leapt, in strong despair,
From the idea that he would lie a corse.
Oh, how we counsell'd, struggled, watch'd, and clung,
Cried out for aid, entreated, pray'd, and wept,
Look'd in his eyes, o'er all his motions hung,
And wak'd in misery, while he restless slept!

It was but now, and he was full of joys,
Here are, just us'd, his playthings and his books,—
Why from his bed, then, breaks that feeble noise,—
Why turns he up to us those piteous looks!

And then we grew rebellious, and would fret,—
And dash'd against our wretchedness, and tried,
Like a wild flying creature in a net,
Its tangling folds,—beating from side to side!
When dark, we long'd for light to give him strength,
And cried at night, "Oh had the morning rose!"
At morn we loath'd the dull day's dreary length,
And pray'd for night, to bring him some repose.
Moments went slow, counted by dropping tears,
Yet, as they made his life, we wish'd them years.
Sorrow is proud, and lonely, and would close
Our doors against inquirers, vainly kind;

But Fear is mean, and hungrily is tin'd
To catch at crumbs from strangers or from foes;
And it would drive us pitiably to seek
The starveling hope that common callers give:
We swallow'd greedily what they did speak,
For they were sure to say,—"The child will live!"

Those to whose skill we gave this precious care
We search'd their faces,—comfort, or despair?
Then thought distractedly of absent friends,
And bid them help, or else all friendship ends.
If for a need like this it has no worth,
'Tis but a mockery of the helpless earth;
The shadow of the land upon the deep,
That sinks beneath the feet it tempts to leap;
The curst delusion of a desart lake,
That sparkles on the fever'd traveller's soul,

And bids him in its silver coldness roll,
Then gives him burning sand his thirst to slake.

Such were our raving agonies of heart,
For a whole awful fortnight's cruel length;
We fought against the truth, yet it would start
Into our shrinking souls with plunging strength.
But he lay quiet, patient, meek, and mild,
Complaining little, though a wasting child;
Like a calm inland tide he went away,
Which surely goes, while it appears to stay;
His gentle life seemed lingering where we stood,
But, ah, the dust was gaining on the flood!
Sense, tow'rds the end, wander'd 'mongst things he knew,
Confusing and mis-matching, like the show
Of a fair mansion, when the dwellers go,—
But to his parents to the last was true:
Strangling our sobs, we flung ourselves to clasp
His hands, that search'd in weakness for our grasp,

And when his failing fingers ceas'd to move,
His eyes still sought us out, and claim'd our love;
Nay, on the very brink, he cherish'd care
For distant ones,—inquiring of their fare;—
And when of good he heard us whispering speak,—
His lips seemed touch'd with evening's latest streak.

As time grew short with him, we felt it worth,
In real import, ages of the earth;
For what we had, we measur'd by its loss,
And then the gold is greater than the dross.
Facts, thoughts, imaginations, crowding came;
Careless of date or distance, in they burst
At once,—as if they were a whirling flame
They kindled altogether,—last and first.
Our spirits labour'd, and we felt them choke,
For they were full of all he'd done and spoke,
Since those blue eyes first smil'd upon the light,
That now were closing slow, in ceaseless, hopeless, night.

He was too gentle even to fight with death,
But hard it is to draw the dregs of breath,
And hard he drew them,—and we had no aid
For him whose breath to us had music made;—
Who never had a thought that he *could* be
Beyond our reach to help, our sight to see;
Who knew himself but in our anxious tending,
Amusing, and providing, and defending;
Who had it not within his simple heart
That he could thus be forced to depart
From his dear mother, from the happy day,
From love, from sights, from the fresh air, from play:
He saw the Sun continue in the sky,
And while it shone, how should he think to die!
To all his childish wants he knew we'd give,—
How should he ever want the means to live!
Death was a word he heard but could not feel,
He never had a wound we did not heal,

He slept to wake, and well he knew that while
He slept, we'd come, and whispering look, and smile.
Death was a word, but meaning-less to him,
He lived in spirit as he lived in limb;
Air was to freshen,—water was to flow,—
The fields to brighten, and the flowers to grow;
Time was to bring him what he wish'd to find,
Lips were to laugh, and faces to look kind;
Strange places show'd him what he longed to see,
And home return'd him where he liked to be;
The world went round,—he gladly went with it,—
And we went still with him,—and all was fit.

Oh, 'twould have been a thought his soul to scare,—
Young as it was,—that he should be *no where!*
And we remain,—remain where he had been,—
And see his haunts,—and he not to be seen;
And meet the day's concerns,—common and many,—
And he no longer have a part in any;

That hourly services should still be done,
And, he who did the most, should not do one;
That round our fire-place he should have no seat;
That at our table he should eat no meat;
That eve should come, and he not go to bed;
That we should rest, and no good-night be said;
That we should rise, and dress, and go without him,
And neither find him, nor yet ask about him;
That friends should call, and no one give him cheer,
That he, to whom all spoke, should nothing hear;
That he should ne'er go out with us, but stay,—
Be ne'er within, but always be away;
That light and warmth should comfort in our room,
And he be left alone in cold and gloom;—
That, all his journeys o'er, he'd cease to roam
Our fellow-traveller,—yet ne'er go home!
That they, whose greetings he forethought with pride,
Should shut the door, and he be left outside;

That we should have a welcome back from all,
But not a look, or hand, or word for Paul:
No story told of those he loved so well,
No story heard of all he had to tell;
Nor even they,—the two he long'd to see,
Who help'd his sports, and nurs'd his infancy;
Who fed his fondness with a humble zeal,
That taught it a triumphant sense to feel,
Yet made it fervent, in the pure effect
Of a child's consciousness of self-respect,—
Nor even *they* come forth to help him in,
And the congratulating noise begin;—
No warm embracing, no exulting showing,
Mixed with recountings of each various going,—
Sudden exclaimings,—breathless interjections,—
The hubbub of the bursting-in affections!—
—That still his mother's tender tones should sound,
But never reach her boy beneath the ground!

All this we feel, but none of it he felt,—
He went unconsciously, as snows that melt
From rocks, that for a season shine in white,
And, when their guest is gone, reject the light.
When his eyes dimm'd and glaz'd, he little knew
That, as he lost us, 'twas his final view;
Though his arms dropt from the fond hold he took,
His spirit startled not, as if forsook:
And this blest ignorance is our sole blessing,—
We cannot measure it—'tis past expressing!
'Tis it dilutes the poison of our pain,
That else were madness, cursing at its chain:
The dart that kill'd him might have been a sting
To drive our natures wild, and make them scour
For ever,—like a creature on the wing,—
Or as it chas'd by some infernal power!
What horror, if our memories were to rear
Perpetual spectres from his dying fear!

Or were remembrance of his voice to mingle
With thought of tones that cause the ear to tingle!
When the time's past of torture to complain,
And the heart's terror prays it back again;
When groans are echoes of each falling drop
Of oozing life, which human help can't stop;
When earnest looks hold hard upon the day,
From one who dares not go, and cannot stay;
When the soul tugs that it may not depart,
And leaps convulsively as fastenings start;
When all distinctions that can agitate,—
Of wealth and poverty, of love and hate,
Fame and disgrace, of amity and strife,
Are lost in one—*that* betwixt death and life;
And the poor gasper would in rapture give
All that for which he liv'd, that he might live!
When friends, who bring around their tears and care,
Excite no feeling but of strong despair,

And with a frantic envy are espied,
As he, who's carried down a whirlpool's tide,
Envies the pitying gazers on the side!
When all the strength of all the world can't save,
Nor all its mountains cover up one grave,
Nor all its caverns give a place to shun,
Nor all its winds supply the breath of one,
Nor all its fires prolong a vital spark,
Nor all its light illume the growing dark;
When all of earthly succour thus hath fail'd,
And shakes the victim by the foe assail'd,
A death-bed's terrible,—and thoughts arise,
Assuming ghastly shapes to haunt the mourner's eyes!

But our child, as he liv'd, so did he cease,
Inspiring thoughts of gentleness and peace:
For this, though beaten down, we thankful feel,
And try to raise ourselves enough to kneel:

He said that he was weak, but not distrest,
For still he lay upon his mother's breast,
And there he felt himself, nor fear'd to leave
Till only *we* had any cause to grieve.
Instead of dismal forms, we see appear
The apparitions of each happy year
That he enjoy'd: though we are sad, they shine,
As if reflections from a sphere divine;
And though the light be far, the gloom be near,
It reaches us, and makes a joining line,
By which we cannot climb to what's above,
But comfort can descend to riven love.

At last it came,—and something told its coming!
As midnight drew, we heard, or felt a humming,
As if on muffled wheels approached a Power
That could dismay our souls, and blot the hour!

We knew a fatal Presence in the room,
And knew that it was come to take our boy;
From shadowy wings there seem'd to spread a gloom
To make existence pant, and smother joy:
A freezing instinct told us Death was near;
Our hearts shriek'd inwardly in mortal fear;
Yet we were mute,—and on the sufferer's bed
We threw ourselves, and held his breathing head;—
Held him, as one who drowns holds to the sand,
That crumbles as he clings,—and falls about his hand.

Short was that time,—but much did it contain;
Things, as in travelling hurry, crost the brain,
And struck with vigour as their course was rapid;
The world spread out, like a great circus-plain,
Where there are idle shows, and stage-plays vapid,—
And men who run at empty rings, with names
Of hope, of care, of pride,—as if worth struggling,—

Giving pretence of business to mere games,
And bidding passion wait on tricks of juggling

Out from the eddy of this multitude
We had been cast,—(and, oh, the shock was rude!)—
And thrown upon the bare and flinty truth,
That yielded not, in feigning or in ruth,
Because our hearts were soft,—but broke them in their youth!

This midnight moment on his death-bed seem'd
The first and last,—the single point of life;
The Past was scattering like a vision dream'd
Of fading comfort, and of useless strife:
Pageants of pleasure, visitings of pain,
Mingled and melted like a phantom-train;
A Show that *had been*,— acting good and ill,—
Made exit now into a cloudy space,

Which all that ever *would be* could not fill,
For nature's seeds had there no growing place.
From all the Past a chasm did us part,—
The Future was cut off from earthly grace,
For here, 'twixt us and it, there was Death's dart,
About to pierce us nearer than the heart;
And we were failing in that chrystal face
Which was our very Souls' fair looking-glass,
In which we saw forms shine, and fashions pass,
And where alone we could our living trace.
Its mirror broken, life would show no more,
But all along the road, that stretch'd before,
Was Death,—dark Death! who, when our child was slain,
Would turn to us,—never to part again,—
And walk with us,—companion mute and chill,—
Through days, or years, up to the time to kill!

It shook him but a little,—'twas soon o'er,—
He made one effort, and he made no more:
Life rippled as it left the shore it knew,
And the surge roughen'd as the wave withdrew:
We saw him struggle,—and we still look'd on,—
We saw him settle,—and our child was gone!

Gone!—is Paul gone? Oh, no! we see his form;— 500
But, ah, that touch tells all,—he once was warm!
An instant has but past, and now we feel
A Power hath shut us out, and fixed a seal;
An instant has but past, and here are we
Parted from him by more than land and sea!
Two hours ago, and we could hear him speak;—
Two moments, and he breath'd, though 'twas in pain,—
But now a passiveness is on his cheek,—
He will not look,—he will not speak again!

It fell on us like frost! awful we were quell'd:
But passion roll'd below, and soon it heav'd,
And burst the icy heaviness and swell'd,
And went in riot forth, as glad to be reliev'd:
For he was blind, whose eye could check excess,—
And he was mute whose voice could sorrow bless.

We mark'd the time, and shuddering said 'twas well,
That sulky midnight struck the fatal knell,—
And that, while others took their joy, or sleep,
We o'er his corse a chilly watch should keep:
We fac'd the blast the more we felt it pierce,
And dar'd the lightning as we saw it fierce.
We hugg'd ourselves that we had not one face
To look to no[illegible], in this great foreign place:
And when [illegible]thought of home, 'twas with a start,
As if it wer[illegible]w,—for formerly 'twas sweet
To sit and thi[illegible]k when *he* and *they* should meet.

Home without him! for what, then, came we here?
To stretch his limbs upon a stranger's bier?
Could not a hole in English earth be found,
That we must drop our boy in alien ground?
And then go back,—alone,—and by that road
O'er which he bounded as to pleasure led,—
And ran for prizes every where bestow'd,
And found the goal, where we have left him—*dead!* *
'Twould nature shame in every native breast,
Its young ones gone, the bird forsakes its nest;—
And wastes by day, and wakes by night the slave,
Because he's torn from the beloved grave.

Shall the clouds throw their shadows as they pass,
In mourning gloom, over his sunken dust;
Shall the winds bow, as if in grief, the grass,
And sorrow's voice be heard, as swells the gust;—

* "Call me not Naomi,—call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." *The Book of Ruth.*

Shall winter shroud him in appropriate white,
And showers fall o'er him as the tears of spring;
Shall the day glance at him, then sink in night,
And the small birds he loved towards him sing:—
Shall careless feet pass by his common stone,
While few, or none, to read his name shall come,
Unless some mother, trembling for her own,
Shall say, "this boy, too, he was dear to some!"
And call her child,—running as ours did here,
Few weeks before men bore him slowly back,—
And with a pointing finger interfere,
As we did then,—the mirth of play to slack:
Shall all this be to his, as it has been
To other graves, by us indifferent seen,—
And he, so watch'd in wakefulness and sleep,
Be left 'mongst many an unfrequented heap?
This is indeed a change!—but we shall be
At home, midst lively faces, o'er the sea!

" What would he think of it, poor child?" we said,
And turn'd with solemn caution to his bed:
He stirr'd not to remonstrate, but look'd sweet,—
His aspect mingling with the smooth-laid sheet:
It never lay so strangely still before;
The stillness seemed a substance having weight,
Confounding life with things inanimate—
'Twas more terrific than the thunder's roar!
Yet holy tenderness reign'd strong within
This heavy stillness,—and we breath'd a vow,—
That as it would have been a heinous sin
To have left him living,—it would be mortal now.

Night deepen'd on us fast; and all the air
Was troubled; and there was a howling heard
Without,—like to a cry of wild despair:
But ours was silent:—Uttering not a word,

We sat within a house where Sleep, and Death,
And Grief had made all quiet:—without breath
We wept, and look'd, and listen'd;—heard the storm
Abroad,—and saw, within, the outstretch'd form
Of Paul just dead!—It seem'd as if a hand
Grasp'd us and him; making him stiff, and cold,
And prostrate,—who of late did go, and stand,
And shout, and laugh, in love and pleasure bold,—
Cheering himself and us, and all who came
Within our dwelling:—by him were we known;
He was a sign of welcome, still the same;
A beam of joy in which our pathway shone.

Still deeper grew the night,—and still more loud
Became the storm,—and weightier seemed to spread
The mantling shade of death,—which, like a cloud,
Hung o'er that place of pleasant rest, his bed:
Thought waxed listless, for his life was past,
And every moment left it more behind,

Like to a thing that overboard is cast
When the forc'd vessel drives before the wind.
And now we were o'erpower'd by grief and gloom,—
Our charge was lost, our watch why should we keep!
A heaviness steam'd on us like a fume—
'Twas rather stagnant senselessness than sleep—
We rose, and left him dark within his room.

'Twas sleep that came,—but, unlike former times,
There was no previous feeling of repose;
It fell at once, like night in torrid climes,
Which drops down with a crush, when daylight goes.
It lay upon us like a vapour's load,
It left us like the bursting of a tomb,
Which, in one instant, sends the soul abroad
From long oblivion, upon endless doom.

We woke to a chang'd world:—the early light
Broke mournfully;—and greyly in our sight

Gleam'd the blank face of a dread, closed door;—
It struck upon the brain what was within—
We enter'd, and we found him fix'd, and thin,—
A fearful change from what he was before!

He smil'd—but 'twas a smile we did not know;
'Twas gentle, but no sympathy was there;
It spoke desertion—left us to our woe—
And, as we look'd, we felt a freezing air
That almost turn'd even love like ours to fear:
An awful influence was circling near,
And kept us back: our part in him was done
It seem'd to say,—he was not now OUR SON!
But, oh, this was a lesson hard to learn,—
The past rose in our hearts, and made them yearn!

Death hath a regal look,—it lies in state—
Its quietness is that of sovereign power;

'Tis placid in the certainty of fate,
And noble, for it holds not of the hour:
A guarding mystery its couch surrounds,
As though it rested far beyond our bounds.
They're tinsel trifles of which kings are proud,
But there's deep majesty in that white shroud.

And chiefly, is the view of death sublime
When it hath made a youthful form its throne,
It shines then as in triumph over time,
And unworn beauty then is all its own.
Its airy sceptre smote my very soul,
Which with a new possession seem'd to fill,
When imag'd I beheld this pale control
Struck in grand feeling by the pencil's skill!
The picture in its inspiration gave
Two thoughts, that singly can o'ercome the mind:
It brought together genius—and the grave,—
And set the spirit seeking—not to find!

I said, my friend, that I would sing of it—
(For then I bow'd me, though I was not hit)
And faithful to my promise now I'm found,
Willing to draw a witness from my wound,
In favour of thy truth of heart and hand;—
Nor wilt thou deem it trivial evidence,
That I could o'er his laid-out body stand,
And have of thee, and of thy works a sense.
I brac'd myself, in sheer despair of cure,
To pride, because thy fame would still endure!

What is there left me now to think, or say?
Did they not bear our prize—our Paul away!
From thence set-in a winter bleak and bare,
Perishing hope, and stupifying care;
A drizzling mistiness to last our lives,
Darkening all objects, palsying all that strives,
Casting an icy torpor round about,
And driving inward what before look'd out.

Shivering we grope our way,—or rather seem
To walk absorbed in a ghastly dream:
We puzzle when the waking-time will be,—
But wonder most if we our child shall see!

Yet still I owe a debt—it must be paid—
'Tis due to Her whose life hath dropt in shade:
A quick eclipse hath come, and wrapt her dark:
If he was lovely,—he by her was made
Of her own fashion;—I had but to mark
How in her ray his youthful soul grew bright.
A tender planet and its satellite,
These were my lustres—I have seen both fail—
One is extinguish'd—one is shorn and pale,
Patiently setting with a silent wane—
Looking a loss that nothing can regain.

She's fix'd—as with the weight of Sorrow's throne;
Grief lies upon her brow, austere, and still,

And bedded—like an aged, uncouth, stone,
Pressing upon the crest of a green hill.
For her, the hand of each revolving hour
Comes armed with a more tormenting power;
Each minute drags her further from the light,
And adds a shade unto the deepening night.
Her eye still says, "He is not at my side!"
Then flashes wonder how she can abide.

Yet may not patience come?—the calm which grief
Spreads from its own deep bosom as relief.
The soul that yields itself to sorrow's reign,
And kneels a faithful slave, and girds its chain,—
That swears allegiance, and, with settled will,
Bends down to bear the heaviness of ill,
From very weakness draws sustaining power,
Glories in vassalage as 'twere a dower,
Takes pride in matching pain's unfailing sense
Against a loss that brooks no recompense;

Pacing its cell, finds exercise and room,
And shelter for the sight in equal gloom;
It only startles when, through chinks convey'd,
Light's hateful contrast falls, and marks the shade.

The touch that pierces to the quick must sear,—
The loss of hope exempts the breast from fear,—
The prize remov'd, there ends at once the strife,
And death comes easy to a dragging life.
The stream will swell and sink, and dash and boil,
When it runs free and warm in temperate air,
Struck by the frost, it smooths this harsh turmoil,
And settles wan,—an image of despair.
Narrow's the track that we must now pursue,
And oft we turn the Past's broad path to view,
For there his face starts up with objects flown,
While all we have, or meet, is dark and lone.
Yet, looking wide around us, can we grieve
That his soft spirit hath been first to leave?

What could we do for him to earn his stay?
Promise him sunshine for his earthly day?
Oh, tender is the beauty of the mind,
Nurs'd in the warmth of love!—and sharp's the blow
When first upon the heart, that's new and kind,
The world stares hard with countenance of woe;—
Darkening its ghastly features with a frown,
And mixing bitter scorn with plaintive fears,—
Astonishing, alarming, casting-down,
And beckoning onward to a vale of tears.

The heavy hours of unrewarded toil;
The irksome callings of a common day;
The sudden meetings, that abruptly foil
The anxious striver in the crowded way;
The sharp recoil of fancies overcharg'd,
When in the setting light we see the truth;
The amazed 'wakening of the man enlarg'd
From all the dreaming fondness of his youth;

The playing to a friend a double part,
Babbling of confidence, afraid to tell,—
The change to silence, and a sinking heart,
From social hours when mingling bosoms swell;
And (oh, the misery!) hopeless to discern
A dreary road before the feet we guide,—
To mark the eye of love, with sudden turn,
Drop the full tear upon the dark fireside:

With such ingredients charg'd to overflow
Hath been the cup enjoin'd on us to drink;
We've taken the draught,—the beverage is low,—
The pains and joys of life together sink.
Our vista of the past by such a throng
Of sad and sombre images is bounded—
Could it be Us who would his term prolong,
In hazard that he might be thus surrounded!
Within his eyes a candid courage danc'd,—
He went to safety when he saw them fail;

A morning freshness round his motions glanc'd,—
He rested when this splendour waxed pale.

'Tis hard a parent's clinging thoughts to throw,
From a child's life, to his grave dark and low;
Yet feel we—own we—that we better can
Shut up our fancy in his early tomb,
Than stretch it far through distant years of gloom,
And see our boy a broken-hearted man!
Long left by us,—perhaps like us to prove
The wearing sorrow of bereaved love.

But hush! the time for grief's strong cry is past—
Time flies as ever,—shadowing what was seen;
The whole is moving onward,—and at last
What hath been is as though it ne'er had been.
The mist is settling low,—the night is falling,—
And we could smile to think how things have faded,

Since first we rang'd the heights, on pleasure calling,
And chas'd with zeal when accidents delay'd it.
Friendships go by,—and conduct is perverted,—
The taunt of weakness hath a force to shame,—
Trust leans to fall,—Love joins to be deserted,—
And poor Infirmity is crush'd with blame.

Let the nerves brace, then, in the frigid shock,
And take a lofty look from off the rock
On which life's dearest hopes are cast away;
Catch from the littleness of all a sense
Expanding forward, with a power intense,
As the eye opens when the lights decay.

This is a strong-hold gloomy, cold, and stern,
And he hath found a far more mild retreat;
On him it hath not been impos'd to learn
How closely mingle bitterness and sweet.

Then fare-thee-well! though much thou promis'd me,
I'll dry my eyes,—I should not weep for thee.
Thy bounding bark finds shelter in its cove,
While ours must stem the tides, and widely rove,
Disconsolate and shatter'd,—stripp'd of sail,—
A drifting mockery for each wanton gale.

Then fare-thee-well! though still to thee, sweet child!
Thy Father look'd, to feel thy spirit mild
Come on his heart, perturbed thoughts to soothe,
As oil upon the water steals to smoothe;
Though the soft breathings of thy happy sleep,
Heard in the morning as he wakeful lay,
Seem'd, like commission'd whisperings, to creep,
Binding to purity and peace the day;
Although thou taught'st him more than he could teach
In turn to thee,—and to his wants gave more

Than thy youth's weakness ever did beseech,—
And though no power thy presence can restore—
Yet, since the loss is ours—the gain is thine—
Since thou, perhaps, mayst elsewhere brighter shine,—
We will despair,—but we will not repine.

Farewell, on earth! I firmly say farewell!
Though back upon me falls the echoing knell;
A groan of emptiness from what was full,—
A wail of gloominess from what was fair;
Although the utterance seems my soul to pull,
To dissipate it with the word in air!
Farewell to thee is an adieu to all—
My portion here hath still been scant and small,
Till thou wast given, a treasure to my need,
In whose enjoyment I was rich indeed:
And now I'm left again—poor—very poor!
Condemn'd without an object to endure,—

Seeking to rest, yet forc'd to stumble through :—
Life's picture sinks into one jaundic'd hue,—
The foreground stormy, and the distance dark,—
A covering deluge, but without an ark.

Once more farewell!—'tis true that I had hope
To climb with thee the upward mountain-slope,
And triumph in the transport of thine eye,
Matching the blue of an Italian sky,—
See thy blest face spread with a young amaze,
When wonders all unthought-of struck thy gaze,—
And hear thee all thy simple feelings tell,
Forc'd into words by thy pure bosom's swell—
Or watch thee look, and listen silently——

But why continue?—such was not to be;—
And all is now reduced to this——
Objects remain but their glory we miss;

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The surface extends, but the lustre hath vanished,—
We appear to abide, but our spirits are banished;
We have hearts, but no more are they sinking or swelling,
They rot in disuse like a tenantless dwelling;
The spring of our water-course is dry,
And our harvest-field must fallow lie,—
We have turned o'er the leaf to find a blank page,—
The staff of our youth hath dropp'd down from our age.

POEMS.

INSTINCT OF THE SPIRIT TOWARDS THE PAST.

DESTRUCTION hath a power to fascinate,
Stronger than that by which it can appal;
Our nature drags us to the gulph of Fate,
To gaze adown its sides precipitate,
And wonder at the fragments of the fall!
There dwells, we know, our Being's Destiny—
And there the Past, and there the Future lie;
The Tree of Life hath sunken there its roots—

And, though the stem may flourish and rise high,
Its branches overhang, and drop their fruits
Back in the depth,—where only we espy,—
Away from earth,—all the earth's certainty.

Our footing is a line:—the abyss includes
A vastness upon which the spirit broods;
Still hovering over where it must descend:
All that encourages, rewards, deludes,
Causes the stream of mortal thought to tend
To this great gulph,—where fact and fancy blend.
And hence the Soul is charm'd 'mongst heaps of stone,
Where Ruin lies, in ponderous state, alone;
And twilight, as his pall, is ever spread—
As if from some unworldly place were thrown
The shadows of the long departed dead,
That stretch upon the air, from whence life's hue hath fled.

In petty interests and selfish cares,
Our day is parcell'd out, estrang'd and poor;
It lasts by moments,—'tis enjoy'd in shares,
That little have to love, and less that's sure.
Lest men again the heavens should defy,
Frontiers, and creeds, and tongues, they multiply,
That Babel's scattering ever may endure!
But, though a thousand streams at variance roll,
There is *one* ocean that receives the whole;
A mighty unity, whose dark profound
Is yet upbearing,—speaking but one sound,
Which echoes from the deepness of its breast;
And tracing out a path in its great round,
Where meet the North and South, the East and West;
So that extremest parts approach and kiss,
By help of this wild, fathomless, abyss!

And Death is wild, and fathomless, and cold,—
Yet doth its awful waste invite the mind
To launch amongst its horrors,—steering bold,
O'er many a lost adventurer, to find
A sole assurance of our general kind.
A name that floats upon its 'whelming wave,
Or a small wreck of some long-founder'd freight,
Are precious prizes, which men seek to save;—
And o'er such fragments feel they more elate,
Than when full on them shines the pomp of living state!

Fame to the Past with reverence we pay,
Fame from the Future as a right we claim,—
Forward we move, but turn tow'rds whence we came,
To gaze upon the source of glory's ray;
It seems to fade and scatter by the way,
And lose the spirit of its early flame.

Eastward, towards the *Rising*, still doth turn
The heart that worshippeth; for it doth yearn
To catch the flashing of that flaming sword,
Which, waved in the air by cherubim,
Guardeth the fountain-head of things ador'd—
Where face to face man saw his God,—not dim
And doubtfully as now,—and heard him walk
Within the garden in the day's soft cool,—
And, 'mongst immortal trees, listen'd to talk
Of angels, clearing-up his nature's rule—
The mystery that now doth vex and fool.

All proves a natural setting of the soul
Towards the Past: the tides of thought and things
Run contrary;—the onward stream is shoal,—
The reflux hath a deep, resistless roll,
And to great powers, and prodigies it brings:
To giants, heroes, patriarchs, and sages—

Those who stood strongly on the neck of Time;
Who rais'd their heads, like mountain-tops, for ages,
And counted centuries of manly prime!
The stars might sink, but they endur'd, sublime!
'Twixt heaven and earth there was a strange alliance*;—
It took a Flood to wash their strength away,
When marshall'd out in pride's profane defiance!
——Such is the tribute to the Past we pay:—
By every people, period, tribe, and tongue,
The honours of "old times" have still been sung:
They shine from far, a mightier creation,
Clad in the splendours of imagination!
Like to the awful Cordillera's chain,
Which piles its hoariness a thousand ways,—

* "When the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, they bare children to them; the same became *mighty men*, which *were of old,—men of renown.*" *The Book of Genesis.*

And throws its monstrous face upon the main,
To strike the voyager with dumb amaze—
He trembles as he hears, across the waves,
A New World shouted from its peaks and caves!

EXERCISES OF THE MIND.

YES!—there are times when o'er the soul
The rushing tides of rapture roll!
When, swept away by these, the mind
Seems to gain powers beyond its kind:—
New views, and noble, burst on every side—
"By our own spirits are we deified!"*

Yet there are Vultures, that, with ceaseless beaks,
Tear and torment the inward man, who seeks

* Wordsworth.

With spark of heaven to animate his clay:—
The grovelling eye rests easy on the earth,
While he who upward looks, to search his birth,
Is scorch'd and blinded by the dazzling ray!

But from his sorest falls, though keen the pain,
He rises with a glorious rebound;
High-temper'd arms 'tis his to gain,
From raging fires that shake the ground!

And they divinely flash upon the sight,—
But have their use and beauty in the fight,—
In daring dangers, and in wrestling hard;
In the confusion of conflicting things
Breasting the surgy wave that backward flings,
And striking far aside what would retard.

There is a frame of mind that takes its joy
From a high feeling of this mingled state;

Drawing a pride from what doth most annoy,
'Gainst flying shafts raising the breast elate:—
For these give earnest of intrinsic worth,
Display an active work upon the earth,
Forming a part of some stupendous scheme;
They stir the faculties—refine the taste,—
To the soul's flights give height and haste,
And rouse the spirit from its murky dream!

Nor fierce the mood that thus arises,—
The elevation tranquillizes:
Instructed sympathies in kindness stoop
To gloomy depths, where sorrows droop;
Glow, as the touching scene discloses
Where Beauty in the grove reposes,—
Where Fancy fires, and Taste controls,
And Love brings cherub-thoughts to souls:—
They feel within, and look without,
As if all heaven-ward lay the route;

As if the lowest step that's here
Led upward, to another sphere:

They see the ladder resting low,
That Angels may descend to man:
While countless links above him go,—
That man may reach where Angels can!

ENGLAND,

JUST BEFORE THE VICTORIES GAINED IN JUNE, 1815.

O'ER England's plains, in common pace,
Men all their usual tasks pursue—
Yet rest on every English face
A thoughtful cast,—an anxious hue.

The people crowd without the gate,
Questioning moments what they tell;
When busiest we seem to wait,
Around us seems to hang a spell.

Like men who tread on cavern'd ground,
Doubtful if friend's or foe's the mine,
Our feet suspend at every sound—
We fear a flash when sun-beams shine:—

For much indeed may England gain,
But England's loss may be far more;
The noble past she must sustain,
Or see its glories quit her shore:

Lofty the arch,—but not complete,—
This hour its keystone must be plac'd,
Or, trodden under foreign feet,
'Twill only tell of fame disgrac'd:

And, therefore, though, in common pace,
We all our usual tasks pursue,
Yet rest on every English face
A thoughtful cast,—an anxious hue.

But deeper is that settled shade,
Which lies a weight on yonder look;
Bold is the speech that would invade
Trouble that's kept like closed book.

Mild is that woman,—mild and meek,—
Yet haughtiness more heed would show;
She has no ear for those who speak,
No eye for any thing below.

She moves amid the world's affairs,—
But from the world she is apart;
A creature lonely in her cares,
For with her treasure is her heart.

And there are times when chafes and swells
That depth of grief which lay so still;
The shaking of her frame then tells
What racking thoughts her bosom fill.

They talk of victory's joyful stir—
A cry of fear is in her soul,—
For, ah, the merry peal to her
May be indeed a heavy toll!

Night comes,—without a word she goes;
No hand assists to ope the door,—
One pillow waits for her repose—
One shadow falls upon the floor.

No self-command she now can brook,
Within her bosom reason shakes:—
Hush!—from yon bed, within that nook,
An infant's breath a murmur makes:—

Her features soften, and her eyes
Drop tears upon the boy who sleeps;
He, waking, smiles, and "*Mother!*" cries—
The mother's lips compress,—she sobs and weeps!

ENGLAND.

WRITTEN IN OCTOBER, 1815.

DEAR native Land! whom the free sky rewards
With showers of bounty,—balm and freshness pouring,—
Around whose virgin breast millions of guards
Leap angrily,—and are for ever roaring!

Great Land! sure refuge and sole resting place
For human hopes and virtues,—in the time
Of powerful wickedness, and sore distress:—
Less than thy neighbours,—therefore more sublime!

Thou separated spot, by Ancient sought,
Whence giant force, guided by gravest thought,
Might move the heavy world:—thou helm of nations!
Swaying their sluggish bulk,—certain midst variations!

Thou goal of all thy time's endeavour!
Thou awful name, once heard, forgotten never!
Sounding astonishment to Indian ears;
Echoing o'er wilds of water to the poles;
Where'er life lurks, inspiring hopes or fears;
Whose influence instructs, corrects, controls,
The savage, despot, bigot,—and which cheers,
Like light of Heaven,—far-plac'd, ill understood,—
Man's race, where blows the wind, or laves the flood!

At this meridian moment of thy might,
Our joy is grave, as thought of ancient story;

For, like the Deluge, rises on the sight,
Covering the Earth, the flood of England's glory!

And, oh, it spreads from pure and sacred stream!
Afar and difficult its sources lie,
Up, 'mongst those heights of early worth, that gleam
In the fine splendour of our morning sky.

And should the flux of ceaseless Fate
Roll o'er these shores Ruin's cold mountain-wave;
Leaving what's fairest now, most desolate,
Quenching the spirit that now burns most brave:

Seats of Freedom,—hearths of Peace,—
Homes of Virtue,—should all cease!
Where Genius rears its noble crest
Should crawling creatures make their nest!

Oh, thought of agony! should fade this scene
Of cities vast, of meadows green;
Where life with strongest pulses beats,
And shelters, bird-like, in retreats;
Where under glorious public banners,
Temperate skies, with serious manners,
Hardiness unites with feeling,
Richest show, with chaste concealing;
Where woman shines in all her sex's beauty,
Shedding the beam of loveliness on duty;
Where mind is free to try its force,
Where sentiment may take its course;
Where self-respect is inspiration,—
And every brow bears contemplation:—

Moral Magnificence, shouldst thou decay!
Where towers this pile should a foul chasm yawn!

Should darken'd be the brightness of this day,
And a long night precede some future dawn!—

Thou of my soul! *These* of each wish that's purest!—
Living and loving now,—but soon to die,*—
Should the poor remnant of what now seems surest,—
Our dust,—in winds o'er silent desarts fly;—
Or, like the powder'd wreck of Babylon,
Rest for wild animals to howl upon!

Still would the lustrous lights of England's fame,
Remov'd from this, burn in a changeless sphere;
Now prais'd in act, but then ador'd in name;
What's purchas'd now, then paid in holy fear!

* Between the writing and the publication, one of "*These*" has but too well justified the assertion "*soon to die.*"

Scattering our bones, Destruction may be roll'd,—
The heights of British worth will still uphold
Their heads above mutation,—high and hoary,—
Telling a finish'd course, but noble story!

THE END.

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March, 1817.

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